

NSC BRIEFING

15 December 1959

COMMUNIST PENETRATION OF LATIN AMERICA

- I. Communist influence has been rising in Latin America since 1956.
 - A. There are 21 Soviet bloc diplomatic and consular missions in five countries.
 - B. Communist parties now have legal organizations in nine countries.
 - C. LA Communist party membership now estimated at 220,000 to 240,000, an increase of 10 to 15 percent over estimates in early 1958.
 1. Strength of CP sympathizers probably at least 650,000.
- II. Sino-Soviet bloc diplomatic and consular missions engaged in varied political, economic, subversive, and propaganda activity.
 - A. Primary objective of bloc and local Communists is to disrupt all aspects of US-LA relations--diplomatic, economic, and cultural.
 - B. Bloc missions provide funds, guidance and other support to local Communist parties and Communist-front organizations.
 1. Soviet embassy in Mexico City and legation in Montevideo are administrative centers for publishing and distributing Sino-Soviet bloc printed propaganda and films throughout hemisphere.
 2. Bloc subversive activity illustrated by expulsion of Soviet and Sov bloc diplomats early this year from Mexico and Argentina for intervention in internal affairs these two countries.

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3. Bloc cultural organizations in Latin America and International Communist-front organizations support local Commies.

4. Bloc scholarship program also apparently increasing.
LA travel to Bloc in 1959 will set all-time high.

III. Chicoms have considerably stepped up their political activity in the area, especially since early 1959.

- A. LA travelers to China, including important parliamentary delegations, will probably treble in 1959 over level of 1958.
- B. New China News Agency has established branch in Habana and reportedly hired correspondents in Chile, Venezuela, Colombia and possibly other countries.
- C. Large Chinese Communist acrobatic troupe and journalist delegation visited four countries.
- D. Chicoms training LA Commie leaders in China since 1958, in attempt to expand their role in guidance of LA Communist parties.

IV. Latin American and private attitudes apparently softening toward bloc since Khrushchev visit to US and concerted bloc effort to exploit the thaw in the cold war.

- A. Bloc economic campaign has registered principal gains.
 - 1. Mikoyan visited Mexico to open Soviet exposition there and made several anti-US speeches. He tried to identify bloc with national liberation of Mexico from foreign economic imperialism.
 - 2. Cuba has asked that the exposition be sent to Habana after closing in Mexico.

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3. Brazil has sent a trade mission to Moscow which signed a three-year trade and payments agreement amounting to \$214 million, the largest ever signed by a bloc nation with a LA nation.
 - a. Soviet \$100,000,000 credit granted to Argentina in 1958 for purchase of oil equipment was largest previously.
 4. Chile has decided to send an economic mission to Moscow in early 1960.
 5. Castro has sent an arms purchasing mission to Europe which visited Prague.
- B. Bloc has also scored political gains.
1. Cuba abstained from vote in UN to postpone Chinese representation.
 2. Venezuela has been considering exchange of diplomatic missions with one or more bloc countries and granted Czech request to set up a commercial agency in Caracas.
 3. Brazilian Foreign Minister at time of Khrushchev's visit indicated Brazil might review its policy on relations with the USSR.
 4. In September Bolivian congress passed resolution calling for relations with USSR.

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- V. Since 1958, regional Communists have registered principal gains in Venezuela,--now the second largest Communist party in the area and in Cuba.
- A. Castro's brand of anti-Americanism and socialism has played directly into hands of Communists and Soviet Bloc is seizing opportunities presented.
- B. Venezuelan Communists, though not admitted to Pres. Betancourt's coalition, have strong influence over press, students and are second strongest party in influence over organized labor; also their strength concentrated in politically focal Federal District where Betancourt is weak.
- VI. Organized labor and student-intellectual groups are among principal targets of Latin American Communists.
- A. Communists frequently collaborate with nationalistic and leftist elements in organized labor to wield a disproportionate influence over national labor movements.
1. Communist influence is strong in labor field in Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Panama.
2. Communists use labor agitation to promote unrest and violence and to upset government economic stabilization programs.
- B. Confederation of Latin American Workers (CTAL) the regional affiliate of the Communist WFTU, has affiliates

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which are important to the local labor movement only in Ecuador, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. CTAL now largely discredited.

1. Current Communist objective in labor apparently is to abandon CTAL eventually and wean Latin American labor away from the US-supported ORIT-ICFTU, the free world international labor organization.
2. Communist line apparently is to advocate affiliation with neither the West nor the Soviet Bloc and thus break US-LA labor ties and associate Communists with more respectable non-Communist labor elements.

VII. Student-intellectual groups are also key Communist target.

- A. Government reluctance to take strong action vs. student violence and extreme nationalist sentiments among students render them peculiarly susceptible to Communist exploitation.
 1. Communist influence strong among students in Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador and Nicaragua.
 2. Communists have exploited or led student violence since 1958 in Peru, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay, and Argentina.
- B. Intellectual groups, especially artists, teachers, and journalists often co-operate with Communist objectives and are sympathetic to Communist anti-US propaganda.